FD-302 (Rev. 4-15-64)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

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Date 4/13/68

Patrolman VERNON VERNARD DOLLAHITE, Patrol Division, Shelby County Sheriff's Office, residence 3330 Dawn Drive, Apartment 12, home telephone 358-8067, Memphis, Tennessee, was interviewed by Lieutenant W. S. SCHULTZ, Homicide Bureau, Memphis Police Department, and SA FRANKLIN L. JOHNSON, at which time he re-enacted his movements on the afternoon of April 4, 1968, after he learned that Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING had been shot at the Lorraine Motel. He furnished the following information:

On Thursday, April 4, 1968, he was assigned to Tactical Unit No. 10, consisting of 12 men, half of whom were Deputy Sheriffs and half of whom were police officers, which unit was located at the fire station at Main and Butler around 6:00 p.m., when he learned that Dr. KING had been shot.

Around 6:00 p.m., he and other officers were inside the fire station when he heard someone yell that Dr. KING had been shot. He immediately ran out of the door on the north side of the fire station, then ran east toward the Lorraine Motel, jumping over a fence, and then dropping down about a 10-foot concrete retaining wall which runs along the west side of Mulberry Street. He then ran to the driveway on Mulberry Street, which leads into the Lorraine Motel, to a point beneath the balcony where Dr. KING's body was lying. He stated that he heard an unknown Negro male at the scene say, "The dirty m------ f------ police shot him."

As he ran into the driveway, he dropped his firearm and had to stop momentarily and pick up the firearm, checking it briefly, and then continuing. After going to the scene near where the body was lying and determining that other officers were converging on the area, he immediately ran out of the driveway, running north on Mulberry Street to Huling and west on Huling Street to Main Street, then south on Main Street. As he

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by SA FRANKLIN L. JOHNSON:wp Date dictated 4/12/68

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ran out of the driveway at the Lorraine Motel, he was joined by an officer named MALEY, who ran along with him to a driveway on the south side of Huling Street between Mulberry and South Main Street. Officer MALEY stopped at that point to observe, and DOLLAHITE kept running toward Main.

Upon reaching Main Street and turning south on Main Street, he saw no pedestrian traffic whatever. He continued running south on Main Street until he came to Jim's Grill, a restaurant at 418 South Main Street. The door was standing open. He stepped inside, looked around briefly, seeing customers sitting around eating and drinking, and he announced to all present that no one should leave that restaurant until the police had arrived and approved their leaving the premises. He then pulled the door to the restaurant shut and continued running south on Main Street.

As he came out of Jim's Grill and started running south again, he observed some items lying in the doorway to Canipe Amusement Company at 424 South Main. At the time, he had no idea as to the significance of these items lying in that doorway. He did not stop but kept running south on Main past Canipe's, going a distance of some 20 to 30 feet before stopping. His purpose in running past Canipe's was in order to look east around the corner of the building in which Canipe's is located to see if he could observe anyone running or any other suspicious activity, DOLLAHITE stating that at this time he, of course, did not know the point from which the gun had been fired resulting in the killing of Dr. KING.

Upon running 20 or 30 feet south of Canipe's, he observed that there was no area at that location where anyone could run or conceal himself, there being some large outdoor signs and a fence located just south of Canipe's. In addition, he observed other officers running north on Main on the east side of the sidewalk, coming from the direction of the fire station, so that these officers would have been in a position to see anyone running or any other suspicious activity in the general area in which DOLLAHITE was proceeding. He then turned around and walked north on the east side of Main to the

vicinity of the doorway to Canipe Amusement Company. About this time other officers arrived on the scene and took up a position around the items lying in front of the doorway to Canipe Amusement Company. Patrolman DOLLAHITE then walked west across Main Street in front of Canipe Amusement Company and stationed himself near a blue Camaro parked on the west side of Main opposite Canipe Amusement Company.

Patrolman DOLLAHITE advised that he is positive that after he arrived on Main Street, and until the officers had given their approval, no person left the area on foot. He is equally positive that no vehicle sped away from the area around Canipe Amusement Company after he arrived on Main Street. He stated that the only time he was not in a position to observe the activity in the 400 block of South Main after he first arrived there was during the time that he stepped into Jim's Grill. He stated, however, that he was in this grill only momentarily and he is certain in his own mind that he was not in Jim's Grill long enough for anyone to have run from either of the exits to a rooming house at 422½ South Main and thereafter run to an automobile and leave the scene without his having seen such activity.

With regard to the owner of Canipe Amusement Company, a white man, and two customers inside Canipe Amusement Company, two Negro males, he stated that he saw all three of these persons and was with a group of officers who were talking to these individuals. He stated, however, that as he ran south on Main before leaving Canipe Amusement Company, he did not see the white male, Mr. CANIPE, step out onto the sidewalk. He stated that since he was alone and one of the first officers to arrive in this area, his essential purpose was first to attempt to observe and locate any suspicious person who might be attempting to leave the area, and secondly, wherever he saw any people in business houses or otherwise, he instructed them to remain where they were so that officers later checking the area would have an opportunity to interview everyone who was in the area as soon as possible.

Patrolman DOLLAHITE advised that after other officers had arrived in front of Canipe Amusement Company, and after he had learned during the conversation that

one or more of the three persons inside Canipe Amusement Company reported hearing the "squealing" of tires as a white Mustang sped away from the area, he observed what he regarded to be skid marks at a point approximately one car length south of the doorway to Canipe Amusement Company. In pointing out the general area where he observed these skid marks, Patrolman DOLLAHITE observed that there is space for three automobiles to park between the first driveway south of Canipe Amusement Company (on the east side of Main) and a no parking zone around a fire plug just to the north of this driveway. He stated that he would estimate that the skid marks which he observed were made by an automobile parked in the center parking area, assuming all three parking spaces were filled at the time.

As to automobiles parked on the east side of Main in the area in front of Canipe Amusement Company at the time he arrived on the scene, he stated he cannot now recall a description of the vehicles which he did see. However, he does recall observing about a 1962 red Chevrolet station wagon which he believes was parked in the first space south of the above-mentioned driveway. He advised that he was also under the impression he had seen this station wagon at another point just north of this driveway and possibly the owner had moved the car later on during the evening. He stated that there was an automobile parked directly in front of Canipe Amusement Company, but no automobile parked in the space immediately behind the car in front of Canipe Amusement Company. It was in this blank space, or the number two position south of Canipe Amusement Company, that he saw what he thought to be skid marks and which appeared to have been made as a car pulled away from that position going north on Main Street.

Patrolman DOLLAHITE advised that he had his firearm in his hand at all times when he was in the 400 block of Main Street, and if the witnesses in Canipe Amusement Company reported seeing a Deputy running south on Main carrying a firearm, then undoubtedly these witnesses were referring to him, Patrolman DOLLAHITE.